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Commission on Spanish-Speaking Affairs

Spanish-speaking peoples make up the second-largest and fastest-growing minority group in Michigan. Most Michigan Hispanics are of Mexican descent, and nearly 85% reside in the urban areas of Detroit, Lansing, Grand Rapids, Saginaw, Pontiac, Holland and Adrian. In addition to these full-time residents, Michigan's Hispanic population nearly doubles during the growing season with the addition of the largest group of migrant workers in the Midwest, who are essential to the state's large food processing industry.

What is the Commission on Spanish-Speaking Affairs?

The Commission on Spanish-Speaking Affairs was created by Public Act 164 of 1975 to develop policies and plans to serve the needs of Michigan's Spanish-speaking people. The Commission consists of fifteen members, who are appointed by the Governor with the advice and consent of the Senate. The Commission was transferred by Executive Order to the Michigan Department of Career Development (MDCD) in May 1999 because the department's unique focus on education and career development complements the Commission's primary concerns.

What is the Commission's purpose?

As required by law, the Commission must:

- Conduct studies and recommend solutions to the problems of Spanish-speaking people in the areas of education, employment, civil rights, health, housing, senior citizens, and other related areas.
- Recommend to federal, state, and local government departments and agencies the creation of services and facilities, as needed.
- Serve as a clearinghouse for the collection and distribution of information on Spanish-speaking affairs.
- Apply for and accept grants and gifts from governmental and private sources.
- Request the services of all state and local government departments and agencies to assure that Spanish-speaking people have access to the decision-making bodies that set policies which affect Spanish-speaking people in this state.
- Submit a full written report of its activities and recommendations each year to the Governor, the Legislature, and various Spanish-speaking communities throughout the state.

What are the Commission's activities?

Currently the Commission is striving to market the state's career development services to Michigan Hispanics, encourage initiatives to reduce the high school dropout rates of Hispanic youth, and facilitate efforts to increase the enrollment of Hispanics in postsecondary education and training programs. The Office of Spanish-Speaking Affairs facilitates Hispanic Heritage Month (September 15 - October 15) celebrations and advocates for Hispanics in career development programs operated by the Michigan Department of Career Development as well as other state governmental agencies.

How can I get more information?

For more information, call 517-373-8339 (voice) or 1-888-605-6722 (TTY), or write to the Commission on Spanish-Speaking Affairs, 201 N. Washington Square, 3rd Floor, Lansing, MI 48913.